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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH: CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS
CONTINUE

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¶1. (U) Ceasefire violations continued over the last ten days, as eleven violations were registered and OSCE monitoring had to be stopped because of the firing. Militant rhetoric on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict continued from senior GOAJ officials, including President Aliyev, who said that the situation could be resolved (by force) at any time if Azerbaijan so chose. However, both the President and the Foreign Minister reiterated their commitments to the peaceful negotiation process. Below is Embassy Baku's snapshot reporting on Nagorno-Karabakh related incidents and statements in Azerbaijan.

CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS CONTINUE, OSCE HALTS LOC MONITORING

¶2. (U) In total there were eleven ceasefire violations along the line of contact between March 25 and April 3. On March 25, shots were fired near Aghdam and Gazakh; March 27 near Gazakh and Tovuz; March 29 near Tartar and Jabrail; on March 30 again near Tovuz; and on April 3 near Fizuli and Aghdam. Snipers reportedly killed one Azerbaijani soldier on March 30 and another soldier on April 3 in the Fizuli firings. The firings near Fizuli also wounded one soldier. According to the GOAJ Ministry of Defense's press office, this brings the number of Azerbaijani soldiers killed along the line of contact (LOC) to seven during 2006.

¶3. (U) Additionally, shots fired from the Armenian side on March 29 near Tartar interrupted the OSCE's monitoring of the LOC, according to the Azerbaijani press. (We are following up with OSCE officials to verify the story.)

¶4. (U) Separate from the LOC violations, three Azerbaijani soldiers were injured by landmines during the week. One soldier reportedly stepped on a landmine and two others were injured in their attempts to help him. In addition, one Azerbaijani soldier captured by the Armenian side was repatriated during the week under the auspices of the ICRC.

¶5. (SBU) During the week the press also carried a comment by the International Crisis Group's Project Director Sabine Frazier that in 2005, LOC firings results in around 90 casualties from both sides. The GOAJ Ministry of Defense told EmbOff that half that number of Azerbaijani citizens may have been killed, but the MOD could not give a specific number of civilians killed last year.

PRESIDENT AND MFA COMMITTED TO PEACE, BUT
DO NOT RULE OUT RESOLUTION BY FORCE

¶16. (U) On March 27 President Aliyev stated Azerbaijan could liberate the occupied territories at any time if it so chose. He said Azerbaijan's position of insisting the country's territorial integrity be respected had not changed and that the GOAJ would continue to participate in negotiations. However, he also said that should peaceful negotiations not yield results, the GOAJ will have to "change its policies." He stated that "Armenia should know that we are capable to solve the problem militarily" and that not only is it a country's sovereign right to increase its defense expenditures, but that it is "natural" for a country engaged in a military conflict and with its sovereignty violated to do so.

¶17. (U) Similarly, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov also commented on March 27 that Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations within the framework of the Prague Process must be continued. However, the Foreign Minister also did not rule out "other measures" should the dialogue be fruitless, including the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity through force. He also commented that recent firings along the LOC are simply a "diversion" by the Government of Armenia and that recent statements by Foreign Minister Oskanian are not meant to be taken seriously, but rather are simply for the benefit of Armenia's domestic audience.

FOREIGN MINISTER MAY ACCEPT N-K'S PARTICIPATION IN TALKS

¶18. (U) Mammadyarov did, however, say that the GOAJ might accept the participation of N-K's Armenian community in the negotiations if that community accepts Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, accepts Baku as its capital, agrees

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that its citizenship shall be Azerbaijani, and agrees to live under the rules of the Azerbaijan Constitution. At the same time, Mammadyarov commented that he does not believe the GOAM wants this community's participation in the negotiations.

PRESS REPORTS ON A/S FRIED'S REMARKS

¶19. (U) During the week the Azerbaijani press also carried the remarks of EUR A/S Daniel Fried on the conflict. The press in Azerbaijan quoted him as saying that the USG is not pressuring either Azerbaijan or Armenia on the issue of settling the N-K conflict because a resolution needs to suit all sides. The press also carried his comments that the USG is providing aid to Azerbaijan for security purposes, along with his caveat that the funds cannot be used against Armenia and will be channeled to fighting terror. The Azerbaijani press noted from the Armenian press that the USG provides equal military assistance to both sides because it is also important to provide for Armenia's safety.

HARNISH